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ABSTRACT

Implications of the California Statewide Longitudinal Study (SLS) of community college students are discussed with respect to articulation between secondary, postsecondary, and higher education. After a discussion of student transfer to and from community colleges and an outline of the scope of the paper, a number of issues and problems concerning the role of the colleges are raised, including the deemphasis of articulation with high schools, the decline in student transfers to 4-year colleges, criticisms of the transfer function, and the locus of responsibility for identifying and counseling transfer students. In the next sections, SLS findings are outlined and their implications discussed with respect to: (1) articulation between secondary schools and community colleges in terms of age, attendance patterns, and student objectives; (2) articulation between the community colleges and 4-year colleges with regard to transfer student prototypes by age, previous education, and enrollment patterns; and (3) students' transfer plans in terms of institutions. The final sections summarize the implications drawn from the data and confirm the existence of a significant flow of students from high schools to community colleges and of strong transfer student prototypes; that the major flow of students from community colleges is to the state university; and that most students expect to be enrolled for more than 2 years in the community colleges. (HB)

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ARTICULATION WITH SECONDARY, POSTSECONDARY, AND HIGHER EDUCATION: ONE LOOK AT THE STATEWIDE LONGITUDINAL STUDY

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Background

A statewide longitudinal study published in 1976 concluded that "continuing education for part-time, adult students has become the dominant function of the Community Colleges" (California Postsecondary Education Commission, 1976, p. i). "Dominant" in this instance referred to the large numbers of students served by this function, rather than its importance or level of support. However, during the period which followed the completion of the study, the Community Colleges often interpreted the conclusion as support for their decreasing attention to recent high school graduates in general and potential transfer students in particular. The new Statewide Longitudinal Study (SLS) supports the general conclusions of the earlier study with respect to enrollment patterns and related student characteristics, while providing new information about the incidence of first-time freshmen in the Community Colleges who are recent high school graduates and students who can be matched with several transfer prototypes.

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While older, part-time students over the age of 20 now constitute a majority of the Community College students, recent high school graduates who enroll in college without a break comprise a significant minority. Studies conducted over a period of years show that more than 40 percent of all graduates of California high schools enroll in a Community College right after high school graduation and that the percentage is probably increasing (California Postsecondary Education Commission, 1982). Looked at another way, the Commission's college-going rates study showed that almost three-fourths of the recent high school graduates enrolling in California public higher education are doing so in a Community College. Thus, first-time freshmen who are recent high school graduates comprise a significant subpopulation in the Community Colleges for articulation purposes, especially since most come from local high schools in the colleges' service areas.

Potential transfer students comprise the other significant portion of the articulation process, that is, Community College students who may transfer to four-year colleges and universities to work for baccalaureate degrees. Information from various sources seems to imply a decline in the transfer function, in terms of student interest, numbers transferring, and performance after transfer (California Postsecondary Education Commission, 1982; University of California, 1980). While Community College transfer students comprise only a significant minority of all SLS students, they are

an important part of the undergraduate student flow into the University of California and the California State University. In 1980-81, the State University enrolled only 28 thousand first-time freshmen, compared with 46.6 thousand Community College transfer students. The number of first-time freshmen in the University was slightly more than three times the number of Community College transfer students in Fall 1980, who numbered 5,356 (California Postsecondary Education Commission, 1982, p. 87). Thus articulation with California four-year institutions is an important subfunction for the Community Colleges, although a minority of their students fit the transfer prototypes.

Articulation with other Community Colleges and with private postsecondary institutions--both as sending and receiving institutions--cannot be ignored, nor can the so-called reverse transfers from four-year institutions who attend Community Colleges. Numbers of reverse transfers appear to be increasing but the size of the group for whom articulation arrangements are needed is probably smaller than the traditional transfers from two- to four-year institutions.

Scope of the Paper

This paper on articulation between secondary and postsecondary and higher education is one of a series which deals with various aspects of the Statewide Longitudinal Study and its related student data base. It does not focus on the transfer function per se because of the attention given to that perspective in the paper on Implications of the Statewide Longitudinal Study for the Academic Curriculum/Collegiate Function in California Colleges: A Review Paper. However, articulation and transfer cannot be separated in reviewing the SLS since they are dependent on the same student data base. At the same time, the scope of the articulation paper is somewhat larger in that it includes articulation with secondary as well as postsecondary and higher education institutions.

The scope of the articulation paper was to include both private and public institutions at all levels. However, the study does not differentiate between private and public in such a way as to make such a focus feasible. This limitation in scope does not appear to be serious since the major flow of students into and out of the Community Colleges involves the public sector of education. A second limitation in the analysis of articulation in the SLS concerns vocational-technical education. SLS has no information about the nature of the high school curricula pursued by students in the

various Community College prototypes. Therefore, no implications can be drawn concerning this important aspect of secondary-postsecondary articulation.

Issues and Problems

The California Community Colleges became a full partner in the State's tripartite system of public higher education under the 1960 Master Plan for Higher Education in California (State Department of Education, 1960). In earlier decades they had for the most part been part of unified school districts (grades kindergarten through 14) and were commonly viewed as mere extensions of secondary schools. The Master Plan entrusted the Community Colleges with the preparation of increasing numbers of lower division students with baccalaureate degree objectives as one means of assuring access for all young people with such interests and capability. This increased responsibility of the Community Colleges for lower division preparation led to increased emphasis on articulation with the University and the State University, with what appears to have been a decline in articulation activities involving secondary schools.

Throughout their history, Community Colleges have been open-door institutions which enrolled students without regard to their previous educational preparation or experience. New students include

dropouts as well as graduates, and transfers from both high schools and four-year institutions, together with transfers between Community Colleges and former students from other types of postsecondary institutions. Because the Community Colleges have no admission standards, they have seen no need for articulation programs involving secondary schools. Some might view such activities as contrary to the spirit of the philosophy of open admissions. Inattention to articulation with secondary schools during the past decade has also been the result of changes in the student population in the Community Colleges, specifically, an increase in the proportion of students who do not enroll directly after graduation from local high schools and whose interests and objectives often differ significantly from those of the recent high school graduates.

These several factors--partnership in higher education, open-admissions philosophy, and, more recently, increased diversity of students--have apparently resulted in the Community Colleges deemphasizing articulation with secondary schools with respect to academic and vocational curricula, competencies in basic skills, and services to variously disadvantaged students. Since the Community Colleges enroll a large majority of California students entering higher education and a near majority of their local high school graduates, their inattention to secondary school articulation is regarded as a problem as the State attempts to increase the effective use of its scarce resources for funding education at all levels.

Articulation with higher education has not suffered from the same kind of neglect during the past two decades. At the same time, it has not been characterized by innovation or improvement, nor expanded to include postsecondary, non-degree-granting institutions. Under relatively stable policies and practices, the flow of Community College transfer students to the University and the State University has been declining since the mid-1970s (California Postsecondary Education Commission, 1982). While the Community Colleges are not indifferent to articulation issues, many appear to be overwhelmed by other kinds of problems--unfunded enrollment, collective bargaining, disadvantaged students with special needs, and other matters related to fiscal constraints. Still, they continue to offer transfer programs, certify courses to meet general education and other baccalaureate degree requirements, participate in statewide articulation activities, and defend their overall performance of the transfer function.

Two kinds of criticism of the transfer function have emerged during the last few years, somewhat independent of the controversy over numbers of transfer students. The first area of criticism relates to the success of the Community Colleges in identifying and preparing students from ethnic minority groups for transfer, particularly Blacks and Chicanos. The Community Colleges play the dominant role in providing access to higher education for disadvantaged students. However, the percentages of Blacks and Hispanics in the University

and the State University transfer groups are significantly smaller than the percentages of these two groups in the first-time freshman population (California Postsecondary Education Commission, 1982, pp. 61 and 84). The second area of criticism involves the persistence and performance of Community College students after transfer. Findings now available are rather inconclusive because of shortcomings in data collection. Attrition after transfer appears to be high but the portions which can be attributed to poor preparation versus other reasons are unknown (California Postsecondary Education Commission, 1981, pp. 11-14).

Finally, an articulation issue which relates to both secondary and postsecondary and higher education is the locus of responsibility for identifying and counseling students with potential for baccalaureate-level work. Cooperative outreach efforts by colleges and universities make the identification of such students increasingly feasible at the secondary school level. However, the advantages to some students of enrolling in a Community College for the lower division portion of their baccalaureate programs are not clear to counselors. There is no clear consensus within the Community Colleges concerning the identification of potential transfer students--whether the need exists for such a process, the appropriateness of doing so, and, if it is to be done, how and when to do so. Self-identification on application and registration forms lacks reliability as a technique. The analysis of records of program

completers for eligibility to transfer may produce reliable results but involve poor timing for students who had not planned earlier to transfer. Identification of students with potential to do baccalaureate-level work is probably done best as part of an ongoing, dynamic process such as the Student Accountability Model (SAM) used in SLS, accompanied by academic and career counseling and advising.

Findings and Implications from SLS

Secondary School/College Articulation Findings: About 46 percent of the new students in the SLS sample reported no break between high school and Community College enrollment; an additional 19 percent had a break of two years or less. Thus nearly two-thirds of the new students in the Fall 1978 sample entered the Community College directly or soon after leaving high school, usually after graduating.

Looked at another way, the modal age of the SLS sample in Fall 1978 was 18 years; 43 percent were under 20 years of age when they first enrolled at the SLS sample of colleges.

About 8 percent of the SLS sample entered the Community Colleges without a high school diploma. About 46 percent of the high school dropouts in the SLS sample were age 19 and under; two-thirds were

under the age of 25. The percentage of non-high school graduates among the Chicanos and American Indians was significantly higher than the percentages found for the other ethnic groups.

SLS also reports that only 10 percent of the sample attended a private school before enrolling in a Community College in Fall 1978. However, the report is not clear about the inclusion of postsecondary collegiate institutions in the finding.

Finally, SLS found that recent high school graduates (and, presumably, dropouts) tended to be day, rather than evening students in the Community Colleges. They also had a higher expectation of enrolling for two years ("two years" was the answer given by 42 percent to the question concerning their expected length of stay in the Community College). The youngest age group in the sample also showed a pattern of high interest in Business and Management, Engineering, Health, and General Transfer, and low interest in Self-Enrichment (when asked about what kind of job they were training for). Not surprisingly, SLS also found that the youngest age group was carrying the heaviest credit load during the first term in which the study was conducted.

Implications: A great deal has been written about the changing characteristics of the Community College student body, compared with that of the "junior college" of the 1960s. SLS has shown that

the California Community Colleges are now enrolling a diversified population with respect to age, attendance patterns, previous college experience, and, most of all, objectives other than degree completion and transfer. At the same time, SLS has shown that fairly recent high school graduates are still in the majority among first-time students, and that they tend to behave like traditional students with respect to attendance patterns and objectives.

The SLS finding that the age distribution for the sample of first-time students differs significantly from that of the total population in the Community Colleges may indicate that ". . . more younger students than older students transfer or leave the college in successive semesters" (Hunter and Sheldon, Part I, p. 24). However, the follow-up a year later found that "attending" students were significantly younger than "non-attending" students (Hunter and Sheldon, Part III, p. 62).

Very little has been done in SLS to isolate and then follow the large sub-groups which enrolled in a Community College directly after high school. In a few analyses, "age" provides a reasonable proxy for "recent high school graduate" status. For example, in the 15 to 19 age group, 57 percent of the students were classified as "vocational" and 43 percent as "nonvocational" in Fall 1978. Still another limitation of SLS with respect to secondary school-Community College articulation is the lack of information in the

data base about the type of program students pursued in high school, their performance in high school courses, eligibility for University or State University admission, test scores, or interests and plans for postsecondary education. This data base limitation should not be viewed as a criticism of SLS since the Community Colleges in the sample probably do not collect or analyze high school transcripts on any systematic basis. The result, in any case, is the absence of any basis for making inferences about secondary school-Community College articulation, except that such articulation may merit more attention than it is receiving at this time.

Community College-Higher Education Articulation (General) Findings: More than one-third of the SLS sample fit one of the seven transfer function prototypes, with the largest percentages falling into the categories of Full-time Transfer Student (10 percent), Undisciplined Transfer (10 percent), Transfer/Technical Major (8 percent), and Part-time Transfer Student (7 percent) (Hunter and Sheldon, Part 4, pp. 3-10).

Special computer runs have yielded a great deal of information about the transfer student prototypes. Compressed into a single generalization, the analysis shows that students fitting the transfer prototypes are a plurality which corresponds quite closely to the public's view of the traditional Community College student--young, recently graduated from high school, enrolled in day

classes, and more likely to persist than students in the other prototypes. The traditional, full-time transfer prototype is more likely than other transfer prototypes to have these characteristics.

The following are selected findings from the special computer runs:

1. Seventy-three percent of the students in the general transfer student prototype were high school graduates with no college experience; of those with only a high school education, 45 percent fit one of the transfer prototypes. Comparable percentages for the full-time transfer prototype are 81 and 32, respectively.

   In the matrix of transfer prototype X highest level of educational attainment, the largest entry is for high school graduates who were full-time students in Fall 1978 (23 percent of the sample).

2. Seventy percent of all students in the transfer prototypes entered a Community College right after high school; expressed another way, 55 percent who enrolled in a Community College right after high school fit one of the transfer student prototypes. Of the students who had been out of school five or fewer years, 44 percent fit a transfer student prototype. Ninety-two percent of all transfer prototype students had been

out of school fewer than six years when they enrolled in the SLS sample.

3. Analysis of age shows that 71 percent of the students in the transfer prototypes were between 15 and 19 years old when they first enrolled in the SLS sample; of this age cohort, 56.5 percent fitted one of the transfer prototypes. Transfer prototype students age 15 to 19 were the largest cell in the age X prototype matrix, comprising 26 percent of the total SLS sample.

4. Students in the transfer prototypes (particularly the full-time transfers) were more likely than other students to persist through the semester and from semester to semester throughout the SLS study. Percentages not registered or earning no credit in successive semesters were reported to be 0 percent for Fall 1978, 20 percent for Spring 1979, 36 percent for Fall 1979, 48 percent for Spring 1930, 68 percent for Fall 1980, and 70 percent for Spring 1981, compared with 19, 48, 55, 66, 74, and 81 percent for all SLS students, respectively.

5. Larger percentages of students in the transfer prototypes said that they were financially or educationally disadvantaged than in the "vocational" and "special" prototype groups. However, the percentages for the full-time transfers were smaller than those found for the other transfer prototypes.

6. The ethnic distribution of the total SLS sample does not differ significantly from the distribution for the combined transfer prototypes. However, the ethnic distribution of the full-time transfer prototype contains smaller percentages of Blacks and Chicanos and a larger percentage of Whites than are found in the total sample and total transfer distributions.

7. Colleges in the SLS sample differ significantly with respect to the percentages of their students in the total and full-time transfer prototypes. The total transfer percent ranged from 20 for Contra Costa College to 57 for Foothill College. Cerritos and Contra Costa Colleges had very large percentages in the "vocational" prototypes, while Golden West and Imperial Valley Colleges had high percentages in the "special" prototypes.

Implications: The analysis of prototypes by age, previous educational experience and enrollment patterns shows that the transfer prototype is relatively homogeneous and, while less than a majority of the SLS sample, an important sub-population for which articulation programs and services are necessary. Because of the homogeneity of the prototype, colleges should find it relatively easy to plan and target such activities. Others in the transfer prototypes need to be identified and assisted, but those who are older and who have had other college experience may need individual counseling and advising about transfer in accordance with their particular needs and interests.

Other Transfer Findings: A very small number of students in the SLS sample were reported to have transferred to other postsecondary institutions by the end of the study. Of the 123 in the transfer groups, 42 percent were attending the State University and 17 percent the University of California (Hunter and Sheldon, Part 4, pp. 2-11). Asked to rate their preparation in the Community College on a scale of A to F, 94 percent rated their preparation an A or B, and only 5 percent a D or F.

Nearly one thousand SLS students planned to transfer but had not yet done so by the end of the study, 19 percent of whom were not sure where. Fifty-six percent expected to transfer to the State University, 15 percent to the University, and about 10 percent to another postsecondary institution. Asked how long they felt it would be before they transferred (during their fourth semester of attendance), 12 percent were unsure or undecided, and 59 percent expected to complete one or two additional semesters before transferring. Over one-half of these potential transfer students said that they had made adequate progress toward transfer and an additional 36 percent said that progress had been excellent.

Implications: While the transfer prototypes are relatively homogeneous with respect to age, previous educational experience, and enrollment pattern, transfer students differ markedly with respect to the institutions to which they expect to transfer. However, the

SLS findings contain few surprises in this regard. Annual Commission studies have shown that the major flow of Community College transfer students is to the State University, and that a comparatively small but significant number are transferring to independent California colleges and universities, most of all the University of Southern California (California Postsecondary Education Commission, 1982).

The finding that nearly 20 percent of the potential transfers were still unsure during the fourth semester about the institution to which they would be transferring should be of concern to the Community Colleges where they were enrolled since such students may lose a considerable amount of time and credit as a result of their indecision. At the same time, the expectation of the majority of potential transfers that they will complete five or more semesters before transfer has implications for articulation, particularly if further analysis shows that they have earned Community College credit in excess of what they are able to apply to baccalaureate degree requirements. Increasing costs of higher education to the students and decreased State revenues for higher education appropriations, all suggest the need for better articulation between Community Colleges and other postsecondary institutions, including transfer counseling and advising throughout the Community College experience.

Summary

Articulation is closely associated with the flow of students from high school to college, and from Community College to other post-secondary and higher education institutions. It is more often thought of in terms of the relationship between programs and services in different institutions than student enrollment patterns. However, the latter are essential as a base upon which articulation arrangements may be built. Other papers in the series on SLS deal with the transfer function of the Community Colleges, student services, and counseling and guidance in particular.

The major contribution of the SLS project to the subject of articulation to date is limited to confirmation of the existence of a significant flow of students from high school directly into the Community Colleges, and of strong transfer student prototypes, particularly among young people who do not drop out between high school and college. SLS also confirms findings from other analyses that the major flow of transfer students is to the State University, but that significant numbers also expect to transfer to the University, independent California institutions, and elsewhere. The SLS finding that most transfer students expect to be enrolled for more than two years in the Community College also confirms what is known from other studies.

The SLS data base has very limited information about high school and postsecondary curricula and services which would be useful in drawing inferences or conclusions about articulation. It is also limited with respect to information about private institutions, particularly postsecondary, non-degree-granting institutions. The Community Colleges are both sending and receiving institutions with respect to the latter, a condition which exhibits considerable potential for articulation arrangements. Reverse transfer--that is, from four-year colleges and universities to Community Colleges--also appears to be a fruitful area for increased articulation efforts but SLS has not yet analyzed the dimensions of this reverse flow of students.

Conclusions

SLS once again demonstrates convincingly the heterogeneity of Community College student characteristics, including their objectives and interests. At the same time, SLS reestablishes the traditional function of serving recent high school graduates in degree and transfer programs as relevant to their mission for the 1980s. Although less than a majority, the recent high school graduates who persist in day programs comprise a large enough group to warrant more articulation activities involving secondary schools, as well as the colleges and universities to which they expect to transfer.

Published analyses of SLS data have been fairly rudimentary to date. The major contribution of SLS has probably been the development and validation of the several student prototypes. Additional analysis of the data should take two directions, in terms of articulation concerns. First, the sub-sample of recent high school graduates who enroll directly in Community Colleges should be isolated, described more fully in multi-variable analyses, and followed through consecutive terms so as to gain insights into their objectives and the achievement thereof. The second recommended direction for additional analysis focuses on the prototypes, particularly those related to transfer. Again, longitudinal analysis is needed with respect to persistence and performance of students fitting the various transfer prototypes, with attention given to problems which may impede the achievement of the students' objectives. Finally, consideration should be given to expanding the data base to include information which is pertinent to articulation matters involving both secondary and postsecondary education.

SLS has made an excellent start in creating a data base which should be useful in seeking answers to myriad issues and concerns in the Community Colleges. Use of the data base to date has been relatively unsophisticated but the potential for its use in gaining insights into the Community Colleges and their students appears to be very promising.

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